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### Sneaky Salt Contributes to High Blood Pressure

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**HARDING**  
U N I V E R S I T Y



# Over the Counter

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Harding University College of Pharmacy



## Sneaky Salt Contributes to High Blood Pressure...



By Nicholas S. Marceaux, BS, PharmD Candidate  
and Rodney Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP

**E**ver think of salt as a vicious assailant? Well, it can be if we eat too much of this yummy table companion. Salt has a direct connection to a person developing hypertension, otherwise known as, high blood pressure. This is a widely underestimated medical condition that currently affects about 80 million adults in the U.S. The sodium in salt increases blood pressure because it helps retain excess fluid in the body, which can place an added burden on the heart.

There are other contributors to high blood pressure, but salt regulation is perhaps the one thing over which you have the most control. The American Heart Association recommends consuming less than 1500 mg of sodium per day, which equals about  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of table salt. Most Americans over age two have an average daily intake of more than 3000 mg. You may wonder who puts that much salt on their food, but the answer is – not many people. The reality is that most of us get this extraordinary amount of salt from packaged foods. This problem has reached the point that the New York City Board of Health has mandated restaurants to identify menu items that contain more sodium than the recommended daily allowance. Who knew you could eat your daily sodium limit in one meal?!

We must be diligent in accounting for the “hidden” sodium content in processed foods to avoid exceeding our daily allowance. Understanding how much sodium is in salt is important, and the following conversion table can help you keep track and control your intake.


$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt	=	575 mg sodium
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	=	1,150 mg sodium
$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt	=	1,725 mg sodium
1 teaspoon salt	=	2,300 mg sodium

So, how can I know if I have high blood pressure? It is recommended that you have your blood pressure checked at each doctor visit. You can also check your blood pressure at home between doctor visits using a reliable blood pressure cuff. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise a typically normal blood pressure is 120/80, although there can be a fair amount of variation. Each number that makes up the blood pressure is measuring something different.

**Systolic Pressure:** The top number, referred to as the systolic pressure, represents the pressure that is created when your heart beats and pushes blood through the arteries to the rest of the body. A normal systolic pressure is <120 while a pressure between 120 and 140 may indicate borderline high blood pressure. A systolic pressure >140 is considered to be high blood pressure in most people.

**Diastolic Pressure:** The bottom number, referred to as the diastolic pressure, represents the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests between beats. A normal diastolic pressure is <80 while a pressure between 80 and 89 indicate borderline high blood pressure.

Having high blood pressure causes stress and damage to the organs in the body. When monitoring your blood pressure you should measure it at the same time every day for three consecutive days to get a trend. If you discover your blood pressure is running higher than normal be sure to have it evaluated by a physician. Here are some ways you can prevent high blood pressure or help control your blood pressure, other than daily medications:

- Eat a healthy diet including watching your salt intake
- Enjoy regular physical activity
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress
- Avoid or moderate your use of alcohol and tobacco products
- Take your medication properly 



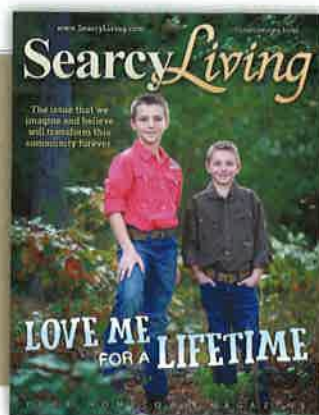
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*On the Cover*  
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The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.

~ Helen Keller

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